

TREE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 7, 2002

Members Present: Garrylee McCormick, Todd Pryor, Bob McClenney, Don Tyrrell, Ted Lupina

Guests: Mary Ann Ampersee

Todd Pryor called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm. He then distributed a copy of a proposed letter to area tree, turf, and landscape contractors, which detailed the contractor's responsibilities in terms of obtaining permits for performing tree work. He also distributed a copy of the Tree Work Permit Process, which specifically outlines the procedures to follow to obtain a permit.

Ted Lupina asked if area utilities, (Ameritech, Consumer's, etc.), would also fall under the permitting process. He also asked when the permitting process was scheduled to begin. Mr. Pryor stated that the process was already in effect. Ms. Ampersee informed Mr. Lupina that the letter submitted for review was an updated version of correspondence which had been sent several years ago to all contractors/utilities, etc., who may perform work on or around trees planted in City rights-of-way. Mr. Pryor stated his intent to also include this information in the "View from the Curb" publication which is sent to all City residences. He stated he felt this would inform as many individuals as possible as to their responsibilities regarding City tree work.

Don Tyrrell complimented Mr. Pryor on the quality of the work in the documents. The Tree Committee indicated their support of this correspondence.

Mr. Pryor then distributed a copy of the Tree Trimming Procedures Standard Operating Procedures which are followed by City Forestry personnel. He stated that these procedures were already being implemented and that they included the goals of street tree pruning, standards and specifications for trimming, and procedures to follow. Also included were safety guidelines, answers to basic tree related questions, as well as diagrams and examples of proper and improper trimming/pruning.

Don Tyrrell asked about specifics related to oak trees, i.e. oak wilt. Mr. Pryor agreed that the document should be revised to include specific verbiage to help eliminate the risk of damages to oak trees.

Mr. Pryor asked for support of the document with the abovementioned modifications. Garrylee McCormick motioned support. Bob McClenney seconded his motion which was unanimously approved by the Committee.

Mr. Pryor then detailed the current notification processes. He reminded the group of recent problems associated with tree maintenance work performed on Merrill Street to facilitate equipment which would be used to resurface the roadway later this year.

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Mr. Pryor stated that currently no notification is left in advance of trimming associated with street construction. However, except for trees in extremely hazardous condition, notifications are left three (3) days in advance of tree removals. When routine maintenance is planned, crews leave "door hangers" which indicate the intent of forestry crew, i.e. routine pruning, winter pruning, tree removal, etc. He also stated that unless a tree is extremely hazardous, a three (3) day period is allowed between the time of notification and the time of actual removal. Mr. Pryor stated that the neighborhood organizations are also notified when routine trimming is scheduled for stretches of particular streets.

Mr. Pryor stated that despite recent accomplishments in Forestry operations, (over 32 curb miles of trimming performed during the past two years), the trees on Merrill had not been routinely maintained for many years and that when Forestry personnel went to trim, they found many declining and dead trees, with large dead limbs hanging over the street and residences. He stated that given the topography of this street, the trees had been protected from prevailing winds which had helped prevent major damages from dead or hanging branches. He also stated that door hangers had been left at each residence indicating where removals would occur. Mr. Pryor stated that only one (1) resident had called, wanting to make sure that crews had identified the correct tree in his curb lawn. Mr. Pryor stated that two (2) other citizens from the adjacent neighborhood had called following the trimming/removals. Mr. Pryor informed the group that one of the problems encountered with the notification process, particularly on this street, was that many of the residences were rental properties and property owners had not received personal notification. He related the process necessary to obtain property owner information from the City Assessor's Office.

Mr. Pryor stated that, per the standard operating procedures previously discussed, crews had been instructed to perform "one stop service", i.e. removal of dead wood, roof and street light clearance, and dead tree removals. Mr. McCormick agreed with the procedure, but stated he understood resident and neighborhood concerns as the tree trunks had been left standing over the weekend, giving the street a devastated appearance.

Mr. Pryor asked for the member's opinions regarding the notification process. After a brief discussion the group suggested that during planning for construction pruning, streets that may be significantly impacted (similar to Merrill), should be identified and notified in a fashion more consistent with the routine pruning notification procedure using door hangers at each residence. Further notification to neighborhood associations should occur far enough in advance of the tree maintenance to be announced at their meetings, and/or included in their newsletters. It was also suggested that Mr. Pryor utilize the Kalamazoo Gazette to place "Public Notices" regarding planned tree trimming/removals.

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Mr. Pryor stated his intention to work with the Public Services Engineering Division to include tree related verbiage in all correspondence/notification distributed regarding planned street repair/maintenance work. Mr. Pryor also stated he would draft a procedure to reflect these changes for presentation at the next meeting.

Mr. Pryor then informed the group that the Tree Inventory data collection was 100% complete. He distributed a variety of reports which included the number and specie of trees, condition of trees, street and neighborhood tree information, etc. He stated that the survey had identified 25,785 street trees and estimated that there were over 30,000 City owned trees including parks and cemeteries.

Mr. Pryor stated that he was planning to process paperwork to purchase additional, updated software which would allow more user access. He informed the group that the next step would be to train users and invited the Tree Committee members to stop in and observe training if they so desired.

The group reviewed the inventory data and were very interested and impressed with the information.

Mr. Pryor stated his intent to investigate a program offered by the Society of Municipal Arborists Association which provided a means to obtain accreditation for Forestry activities. He related that the information he had received thus far indicated that City Forestry crews already meet many of the requirements for this accreditation.

Garrylee McCormick asked if Mr. Pryor had been contacted by representatives of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality regarding their intent to remove trees along the Kalamazoo River, west of Riverview Drive. Mr. Pryor indicated that no such contact had been made, but that he would be willing to try and contact the MDEQ.

Mr. Pryor then informed the group that a boy scout troop from the Edison Neighborhood had contacted him with a request that they be allowed to plant trees in recognition of Arbor Day. He stated that they were also interested in trying to cultivate burr oak acorns which had been collected from Bronson Park.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.